
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6317

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Padden, Takko, Dammeier, Hargrove, and Hobbs)

READ FIRST TIME 02/09/16.

1 AN ACT Relating to the establishment of an office of superior
2 courts; and adding a new chapter to Title 2 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that superior
5 courts are constitutionally established to serve Washington's
6 citizens by resolving legal disputes in domestic, civil, juvenile,
7 and criminal cases.

8 (2) The legislature further finds that the effective
9 administration of Washington's superior courts is an important
10 component of the state's responsibility to fairly resolve domestic,
11 civil, juvenile, and criminal justice cases.

12 (3) The legislature further finds that research is imperative to
13 guide trial court reform efforts that improve equal access for
14 Washington citizens, and that as Washington's population continues to
15 grow and become more diverse, equal access to justice is in jeopardy.

16 (4) The legislature further finds that the cost of litigation has
17 increased significantly, and superior courts require staff assistance
18 to provide statewide development of policies that maintain access to
19 justice for all citizens.

1 (5) It is the intent of the legislature to establish an office of
2 superior courts within the administrative office of the courts that
3 will:

4 (a) Utilize contemporary research to advance trial court services
5 through policy, programs, services, and participation with justice
6 stakeholders;

7 (b) Pursue improvements to family and juvenile justice by
8 maximizing investment in juvenile court cases and promoting policies
9 that equalize access to proven methods of service across the state;

10 (c) Respond to legislative efforts to improve court operations
11 through program and budget development; and

12 (d) Utilize and develop research tools that promote programs
13 leading to best practices that improve public safety in the criminal
14 justice system.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) An oversight committee of the office
16 of superior courts is created, consisting of the following five
17 members:

18 (a) The president of the association of the superior court judges
19 of the state of Washington;

20 (b) The incoming president of the association of the superior
21 court judges of the state of Washington;

22 (c) The immediate past president of the association of the
23 superior court judges of the state of Washington;

24 (d) The chair of the legislative committee of the association of
25 the superior court judges of the state of Washington; and

26 (e) One member of the board of the association of the superior
27 court judges of the state of Washington, appointed by the executive
28 committee of the association.

29 (2) The appointed member of the association board serves a one-
30 year term, and may not serve more than three consecutive terms.

31 (3) Members of the oversight committee receive no compensation
32 for their services as members of the oversight committee, but may be
33 reimbursed for travel and other expenses in accordance with rules
34 adopted by the office of financial management.

35 (4) The oversight committee oversees the activities of the office
36 of superior courts including the selection and retention of staff as
37 well as directing the work of the staff in developing and researching
38 policy issues on behalf of the superior courts.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) A state office of superior courts is
2 hereby created as an office within the administrative office of the
3 courts.

4 (2) Activities of the office of superior courts are carried out
5 by a director appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the
6 oversight committee of the office of superior courts. The oversight
7 committee shall determine the qualifications and salary for the
8 director.

9 (3) The director shall:

10 (a) Respond to legislative requests to provide data to improve
11 court operations through policy, program, and budget development;

12 (b) Evaluate and promote programs that lead to best practices to
13 improve public safety in the criminal justice system;

14 (c) Pursue improvements to family and juvenile justice by
15 maximizing investment in juvenile court cases and promoting policies
16 that equalize access to proven methods of services across the state;

17 (d) Work collaboratively with the administrative office of the
18 courts and other key stakeholders on implementation of statewide
19 technology advancements allowing for data collection and outcome
20 measurement;

21 (e) Report quarterly to the oversight committee established by
22 section 2 of this act;

23 (f) Submit a biennial budget request;

24 (g) Conduct studies and complete activities related to the
25 efficient and effective operation of the superior courts, as directed
26 by the oversight committee;

27 (h) Employ staff, with the consent of the oversight committee, to
28 complete the activities of the office; and

29 (i) Enter into contracts as necessary to implement and complete
30 the operation, activities, and services of the office, where
31 consistent with this chapter.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The office of superior courts shall work
33 collaboratively with the supreme court, administrative office of the
34 courts, and statewide county association to advance the efficient and
35 effective operation of the superior courts in all 39 counties of the
36 state.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act
2 constitute a new chapter in Title 2 RCW.

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